

Lampsheds
L E T T E R

R. Butler (9.) R.C. Archb. of Cashel
FROM

THE MOST REVEREND

DOCTOR BUTLER,

TITULAR ARCHBISHOP OF CASHEL,

TO



THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

LORD VISCOUNT KENMARE.

KILKENNY.

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A LETTER, &c.

Thurles, December 27, 1786.

My Dear and Honour'd Lord,

I AM not a little impatient to impart to Your Lordship my thoughts on a late Publication, entitled, "THE PRESENT STATE OF THE CHURCH OF IRELAND:" It is written by Doctor Woodward, Bishop of Cloyne; and, in the short space of twelve days, has already passed through four Editions. Whoever has seen the Address to the Nobility and Gentry of the Protestant Church and reads this Second Pamphlet, cannot but look upon them as *both* designed to undo all that has been done in favour of Roman Catholics; as they tend to undermine the Primary Title the Roman Catholics had to the protection of Government and the confidence of their Fellow-Subjects. The unjust and false strictures his Lordship makes on the sincerity of the Oaths of the Roman Catholic Bishops, concur to effect this in the minds of those who can or will be imposed on by what his Lordship so confidently asserts. For certainly, if the Oaths of Roman Catholic Prelates can no more be depended on, all Claim to a legal existence for us in the state ceases. We are all designing and most dangerous enemies; like the viper in the fable, we only sought the warmth of protection to gnaw the bosom which gave the reviving heat. His Lordship, to establish and enforce what he advances with regard to our Oaths, by some New Argument which, from not having been used before, had never been blunted by the shield of truth, brings forth a letter of a Monsignor Ghilini, Nuncio at Brussels, written in the year 1768, from amidst the dust of oblivion, where it would otherwise have, as it deserved, remained till doomsday; notwithstanding the most strangely misapplied encomiums bestowed on it by Doctor Bourke: Encomiums, which, I know from the letters the said *Nuncio* wrote to me, before I left the Continent, expressive of

of his own alarmed feelings, after cool reflection, on the impropriety and indiscretion of said letter, he would have willingly spared the Doctor. Nothing, to be sure, but an *Enthusiastic* partiality for *Scholastic Opinions*, which Doctor Bourke, perhaps, had formerly, when professor, defended, (as some Ultramontanists have done, to their reproach and the discredit of Religion, with as much warmth of debate as if those opinions had been acknowledged Articles of Faith, which they were supporting against unbelievers) can any way extenuate Doctor Bourke's imprudence, to call it by no harsher name, in publishing such a letter. The Doctor should have reflected, that the opinions alluded to by the Nuncio, however unnoticed they may be suffered to pass in a Country like Italy, where the Sovereign and all the Subjects are of the Roman Catholic Religion, they cannot be considered in the same light in this Kingdom, whereof the King and Principal Subjects are Protestants, and Two Thirds, at least, of the Inhabitants are of our Communion. Here such opinions, if maintained, could not but be prejudicial, by alarming the Sovereign and being a constant source of jealousy and dissention betwixt Fellow Subjects. — This, I recall to mind, was what I alledged to Cardinal Marefuschhi, who was, at the Time the Oath was proposed, our Cardinal Protector, (that is, as Your Lordship knows, the Cardinal entrusted by his Holiness with the *Superintendence* of our Ecclesiastical Affairs in Ireland,) as a *Reason* why the Roman Catholic Bishops thought themselves called upon to declare, in the public manner they did, that they found nothing in the Test of Allegiance, held out by the Legislature to the Roman Catholics of Ireland, contrary to the Principles of the Roman Catholic Faith: and, therefore, that the *Opinions* disclaimed by that Oath never made part of our Creed. The Cardinal, in his answer, expressed the fullest Approbation of my sentiments; which Approbation of his Eminence was afterwards confirmed by the Pope and the Congregation de Propaganda Fide approving also of the said Test of Allegiance; of all which Approbations I have *Authentic Vouchers* by me; the very Letters written on the occasion to and from the Sacred Congregation. I showed *these* Letters to Lord Pety, when He was

was Speaker of the House of Commons, at Sir Robert Staples's; and I shewed Him again, in Dublin, another Letter which I received from the same Congregation, two years after expressive of their Eminencies' thanks for my diligence in fulfilling what I owed to my station and Religion, since the time I came into the Kingdom. Now, My Dear Lord, I hope I may venture to say, without risking the imputation of vanity or falsehood, that I was most particularly warm and active in promoting the taking of the Test Oath, after I had publicly approved of it, at the head of my Suffragans, in the year 1775; an æra which I have always called to mind with new-felt pleasure; and consequently, the Approbation of my Conduct, *during all that time*, was of itself, had I no other proofs of the Congregation's having approved the Test, Tantamount to an Approbation. Lord Pery, when I shewed Him that letter of the Congregation, acknowledged it was; so did His Grace the Primate, when I had the Honour, on being introduced to him by Your Lordship, to mention it to him.

But that nothing might be wanting, in our power, to consign the letter of the Nuncio to eternal oblivion, and that no One of our people might be ever affected by it, We, (I mean the Roman Catholic Prelates of Munster) in a meeting we held at Thurles, soon after the one near Cork, in 1775, passed our *Decided Censure* upon the *Hibernia Dominicana* and its Supplement; which Censure We, indeed, at first, signified only to our Clergy; not thinking it prudent to make known to the People a Work of the stamp of the *Hibernia Dominicana*; which, from its being written in Latin, and bearing a Title which was not likely to attract the Attention even of Those who understood that Language, would, as I said before, in all probability have remained for ever unknown to them. Our Censure was well known at Rome, without being considered there, in the smallest degree, obnoxious to the Holy See. The Original, subscribed to by the Bishops, I providentially kept by Me; not knowing but the Time might come, when some one or other would, through ignorance or false zeal, profit of a discovery of the Nuncio's letter, and make use of it as a proper weapon to give what he might

might think the deadly blow to all our fond hopes of Protection and Confidence from Government and our Fellow Subjects. My Apprehension of such an Event, Your Lordship sees by Doctor Woodward's Work, was not groundless. At the same time had I not such a Formal and Avowed Condemnation to produce, the letters from the Sacred Congregation and the Roman Catholic Bishops of the whole Kingdom, after the most mature deliberation, Approving the Test, whereby They solemnly declared, in the face of the whole world, their Disbelief and Abhorrence of the *Opinions* alluded to by the Nuncio, was more than sufficient to obviate the ill grounded insinuations His Lordship of Cloyne has held forth.

As a Public and Formal Answer will, I hope, be given to his Lordship of Cloyne's strictures, I'll leave to the Writer thereof (that I may not spin out this letter to an unnecessary length) to enlarge more fully on what I here only Sketch out. For a Public Answer must be given. The Consciousness of our *Inviolable Attachment* to our Oaths of Allegiance; Our lively sense of what we owe to our Sacred Characters; Our *sincere* Wish to promote and preserve that *long desired* Mutual confidence, which had happily begun to warm and link in Social Union the Minds of Persons, of different persuasions, call on us to repel, in the most Earnest and Public manner, any Attempt to undermine what cannot but be most precious to us.

The Author of the Public Reply to His Lordship's strictures will not fail, I am confident, to paint in the most pathetic manner what Our Feelings must be, on seeing Ourselves traduced, as We are, to the Public; and That by the Very Bishop to the Neighbourhood of whose Diocese I and my Suffragans, the Roman Catholic Prelates of Munster, had speedily repaired, to oppose, *as far as in us lay*, with our United Efforts, in the morning of these Troubles, the unwarrantable Attempts made against Ecclesiastical Authority. His Lordship may be also more clearly informed by him of the nature of a Nuncio's Commission, with regard to the Roman Catholics of this Kingdom; His Lordship will find it quite different from what he represents it; and that so far are a Nuncio's Sentiments from being
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looked upon as Decisions of the Church, that Roman Catholic Bishops have dissented, and may dissent, from the Roman Legate, without apprehension of Guilt, in all that does not affect the Established Principles of Faith and Christian Morality. In the Letter alluded to, Your Lordship cannot but have observed the Nuncio gives only *his own Notions*; which, strange as they appear, can be easily accounted for, in One, who, being educated in the Pope's Dominions, and being his Public Ambassador, may, from too warm a desire of aggrandizing the Temporal Power of his Sovereign, extend too far the Prerogatives of his Spiritual Jurisdiction.

As to the Oath taken by the Roman Catholic Bishops at their Consecration, and printed in the Roman Pontifical, which Doctor Woodward brings forth as an *Auxiliary Proof* how little Our Oaths of Allegiance are to be depended on, I shall just observe, that His Lordship has entirely misconceived both the intension and words of the Oath. A little reflection would have made His Lordship sensible, that said Oath is *by no means inconsistent* with the Subject's Allegiance to his *Prince*; that Sovereigns as jealous and tenacious of their Rights as Sovereigns can be, permit said Oath to be taken by the Roman Catholic Bishops in their Dominions; which They evidently never would consent to, but would, on the contrary, strenuously oppose, if They could think it infringed in the least on their rights, or paved the way to *Papal Encroachments*. It is well known *this very Oath*, of which Doctor Woodward speaks, is taken by all the Bishops consecrated in France, Germany, Spain, and in all the different Kingdoms and Republics on the Continent.—The Bishops of the Republic of Venice *all* take it. Frapaulo himself, in his warm Defence of the Rights of the Venetian Republic against the Claims of the Court of Rome, (a work Doctor Woodward cannot be a Stranger to,) never points out to that jealous Senate the Oaths taken by Roman Catholic Bishops at Their Consecration as affording a Ground to suspect their Fealty to the State. This Oath was even taken in Holland, under the eyes of the States themselves, by the Pope's Vicar Apostolic for that Country, who must
generally

generally be a Bishop, and consequently conform to the Rubrics of the Pontifical, which He does without becoming obnoxious to the Dutch. The King of Prussia apprehends no danger from it to his Dominions, though He knows full well the Bishops of Silesia, of whose loyal sentiments he is more particularly interested in being secure, take also said Oath at their Consecration. Nay, the King of Great Britain, Our Most Gracious Sovereign, Whom may the Almighty long preserve, is no way alarmed at having a Roman Catholic Bishop in Canada; being fully assured that a Roman Catholic Bishop in Canada will be as Earnest to oppose all Papal Encroachments as his Confreres in England were in opposing, (according even to his Lordship of Cloyne's acknowledgment, page 48) in the earlier days of the British Empire, those of the *then* Sovereign Pontiffs. For every discerning Person cannot but know, on the least reflection, that None of Us, to make use of the *very* Words of the Great Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux, ever engage Ourselves by this Oath to any Thing that is contrary to Our Conscience, or the Service of our King and Country: far from thinking we prejudice *any* of These, it is even expressed in the Oath, that We take it, without Prejudice to our State, salvo meo ordine. The Submission which is sworn to the Pope in Spirituals, is of a Different Order from what we naturally owe Our Prince in Temporals, and without protesting, we have always well understood, that one does not interfere with the other.—So far that learned and judicious Prelate.

Your Lordship will find these very words of Bossuet, in the Beginning of the First Chapter of the 7th book of the Variations:—They clearly account for said Oath's being so Universally taken by all Roman Catholic Bishops in both Catholic and Protestant States. The SALVO MEO ORDINE removes all fear of the Oath's injuring the Allegiance due to other Princes. The Oath itself at the beginning was only taken by the Bishops of the Pope's Ecclesiastical Territories, Who, from being Subjects of the Pope, as a Temporal Sovereign, swear Fealty to Him both in Spirituals and Temporals, which is not the case with Bishops Who do not belong to the Pope's Dominions; and

and hence, when a desire of Conformity with the Bishops that are immediately subject to the Pope, made it, by degrees, customary for the Roman Catholic Bishops throughout the whole world to take said Oath at their Consecration, They all took care to profess, *plainly* and *publicly*, by the clause SALVO ME O ORDINE, that They did not bind themselves down to any thing in said Oath but in as far as it was compatible with the situation of every Bishop under their respective Sovereigns, and the duty he essentially owes to Them. The Oath is almost of 800 years date; time, surely, sufficient for every Sovereign to know the meaning of it.

The words of the Oath, *Hereticos persequar & impugnabo*, which His Lordship of Cloyne represents as *so alarming* to the Protestant interest, far from meaning what His Lordship seems to think, imply nothing more than the obligation every Bishop takes upon Himself, to be ever earnest in opposing and refuting, by the spiritual weapons of the Gospel, all broachers of Doctrines contrary to its Principles.

These, My Dear Lord, are the Thoughts, which occurred to me on reading that part of Doctor Woodward's work, which attacks the conscientious sincerity of Roman Catholic Bishops. Thoughts, which I was most anxious to communicate to a Nobleman of my own Religion, whose zealous and successful exertions in suppressing the disturbances in the County Kerry, have met with the deserved applause of Government and of the Clergy of both Communions. On that account, I look up to Your Lordship, as the best entitled to avail Yourself with every advantage of the facts I have mentioned, in order to prevent or efface the very unfavourable impressions Doctor Woodward's strictures on us, may make, or have made, on the Public, by misrepresenting the Nuncio's letter as a Decision of our Church, and the Oath Bishops take at their Consecration, as incompatible with our Allegiance.

I have the honour to be,

With the sincerest attachment and esteem,

My Dear Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient servant

And affectionate kinsman,

31 DE 63 JAMES BUTLER,